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ALABAMA ELECTIONS 2018

Bentley, Strange, Trump: Their shadows fall on the GOP race for AG

BARNBURNER IN THE MAKING



Illustration by Sean McKeown-Young, Advance Local

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Alabama’s crowded gubernatorial race will be the most watched political event ahead of the June 5 party primaries. But for pure political intrigue, it’s the Republican contest for attorney general that rivets the early attention.

In the field are: incumbent Steve Marshall, who was appointed to the position in February 2017 by soon-to-resign Gov. Robert Bentley; Alice Martin, a former top federal prosecutor who served as chief of staff to Marshall’s predecessor, Luther Strange; Troy King, the state’s attorney general from 2004-11 who was beaten by Strange when he tried for a third term; and Chess Bedsole, the 2016 campaign chairman in Alabama for President Donald Trump.

Feb. 9 was the filing deadline for statewide candidates to qualify to run under the Republican and Democratic banners. Marshall’s incumbency might seem to

give him an edge, but he’s been on the job for only a year, and his attachment to the scandal-plagued Bentley could be a ball-and-chain. Bedsole, thanks to a \$300,000 loan, leads in the GOP foursome in fund-raising at the moment.

“Right now, if you asked me to pick the most competitive race, it’s the Republican AG’s race,” said Jess Brown, a retired political science professor from Athens State University who’s long tracked the doings of the state’s candidates and campaigns.

King, according to Brown, is the one with the most name recognition. “He has friends,” Brown said of King. “He’ll have his enemies. He’ll have money.”

But some of that name recognition might hurt rather than help. King’s re-election defeat in the 2010 GOP primary came amid lingering reports and scuttlebutt that King’s office was under investigation for alleged connections to gambling interests. SEE RACE, A3

Alabama Republican candidates for Attorney General

- Steve Marshall, appointed Atty. General by Gov. Robert Bentley.
- Alice Martin, former Chief of staff for Luther Strange.
- Troy King, former Alabama Attorney General 2004-11.
- Chess Bedsole, 2016 campaign chairman for Donald Trump.

Woman of the House

Alabama’s legislative races see higher numbers of female candidates in 2018

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There are very few female lawmakers in Montgomery today — 15 percent, or 21 out of 140 state legislators are women. But mirroring national trends, women in Alabama are

stepping up in large numbers, ready to take a seat in the statehouse.

“It’s sad that we are 52 percent of the population, but we hold so few state legislative seats,” said Sen. Linda Coleman-Madison, D-Birmingham, one of only four females in Alabama’s 35-member Senate.

All 140 legislative seats are up for election this year. According to party websites, 63 women — 49 Democrats and 14 Republicans— qualified for state legislative offices by the Feb. 9 deadline. If a female candidate SEE WOMEN, A6



Mary Scott Hunter, a member of the state board of education from Huntsville, is running for the District 7 senate. There are currently no female members of the Madison County legislative delegation. Bob Gathany, bgathany@al.com

ALABAMA

‘I would take a bullet for them’

Protecting students is priority for educators

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“Teachers, we’re going into lockdown.” When Brittany Etheridge, a teacher at Dawson Elementary School in Huntsville, hears those words over the school intercom, she knows what to do.

Check the hallway for any kids who might be out there and pull them into her classroom. Lock the door. Turn off the lights and gather her students into the corner of their classroom, away from the door.

In a real situation, she might get an emergency text on her phone through a texting app, where teachers can communicate with each other — without making noise — to let other teachers know the whereabouts of students who might have been in the hallway or bathroom when the lockdown occurred.

Rachel Evans, an assistant principal at Riverton Elementary School in Madison County, said her students and staff go through a similar drill. Law enforcement have told principals that children should have something ready to throw at an intruder if he were able to get into the classroom.

SEE STUDENTS, A4

MONTGOMERY

Lawmakers skeptical of arming teachers

But looking for ways to make schools safer

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Alabama House Speaker Mac McCutcheon said he’s encouraging legislators to “put their thinking caps on” and look for possible ways to improve school safety in the wake of Wednesday’s mass shooting at a Parkland, Florida, high school.

McCutcheon, several other Republican House members and public safety officials held a news conference Thursday in response to concerns raised about school safety.

They did not endorse the proposal that another Republican House member floated earlier Thursday — to have schools designate some teachers and administrators to receive firearms training and carry concealed weapons at school to protect students and employees.

McCutcheon said it was too early to say whether he would support that proposal. Rep. Will Ainsworth, R-Guntersville, who said he will sponsor the bill, said he had research to do first.

SEE TEACHERS, A4

Remembering the victims

Heroic. Vibrant. Loving. Go-getter. These are just some of the words heartbroken loved ones used to describe the 17 people killed by a gunman at a Florida high school. A18

LOCAL + REGION

Statewide honor

A Huntsville fifth-grader finds out at a school assembly that she’s won the statewide Arbor Day poster contest. A2